Disassociation and Identification:
Remy de Gourmont's influence on Kenneth Burke

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CHAPTER ONE:

Overview & Kenneth Burke's First Encounters with Remy de Gourmont

Overview

> He was both artist and philosopher, both poet and critic. He has left poems, novels, literary criticism, dialogues, essays in psychology and anthropology, ethics and biology; he was a skeptic who dabbled happily in mysticism and theology; a poet with an almost excessive respect for logic. We cannot say that any one of these aspects of his complexity is more marked than the others. He was more a poet in his youth, more a philosopher in his maturity; but he wrote poems in the last year of his life and some of his earliest writing is critical. This plentitude and versatility of mind [are what] make him so interesting.
>
> ----Richard Aldington, *Selected Critical Writings, 1928-1960*

As any avid reader of Kenneth Burke is probably aware, the above quotation makes a markedly decent description of him. In his youth, he produced poetry mimicking the style of free verse practitioners as well as that of traditional verse (Selzer 69). In his maturity, his work adjusted its focus into more critical, theoretical contributions on human motivation and rhetoric for which he would have gladded accepted the accolade "philosopher." Yet, his poetry starts to remerge during his later years (especially after the death of this second wife, Libbie) and elements of critical, theoretical evaluation are scattered throughout his early works. He was a critic starting with his work for *The Dial* and *The Nation* and only ending with his death at Andover in

1993. Furthermore, his work as artist is displayed not only in his poetry, but also in his short stories, his novel, and his performative commentary on the debated status of art.

In short, Burke's own versatility and complexity of subject and approach is what makes him a scholar of continued examination to date. His utilization of psychology can be seen in Thorstein Veblen's concept of "trained incapacity" to augment his description of occupational psychosis and human orientation, not to mention his employment of Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis across various texts. Studies in anthropology supplement his study of mysticism and magic as a counterpart/point to science. Components of biology appear in his action/motion distinction as well as his infamous Demonic Trinity. Theology receives a special focus of study in his *Rhetoric of Religion*, and ethics has been conceived as the underlying project of Burke's entire *Motivorum*. In borrowing the term and idea from Debra Hawhee's latest book, *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*, we might truly call Burke and his works more than interdisciplinary; they are transdisciplinary.

However, what is most interesting about the featured quote from Richard Aldington is that, while it could be used as an accurate description of Burke, it actually describes the life of French Symbolist Remy de Gourmont. Now regularly forgotten, de Gourmont was a prominent, though perhaps not central, figure in criticism and continental discussions of art (taking part in discussions of Art for Art's Sake, etc.). The reason I choose the above quote is to illustrate early on some of the parallels that de Gourmont shares with Burke not only in produced works but in textual development as well. Both start as poet/novelist/critic in youth, remain critic, and develop into critic/theorist.

Still, their biographical similarities and parallels are not the sole thing I wish to propose here. Instead, I hope to establish the prominence of Remy de Gourmont in Burke's thought, analysis, and writing. Whilst Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche are already understood as pivotal building blocks for Burke, de Gourmont is sadly, and I believe mistakenly, not. This thesis hopes to remedy such a misunderstanding through assessing and acknowledging Burke's utilization of de Gourmont throughout his works.

Though Jack Selzer has shown that de Gourmont plays a principal role early in Burke's career, later biographies and commentaries still overlook his contributions in Burke. In fact, most biographies and commentaries never critically link Burke to de Gourmont, and only two authors have done so extensively: Jack Selzer and Glenn Burne.

In his 1963 book *Remy de Gourmont: His Ideas and Influences in England and America*, Glenn Burne traces the life, philosophy, literary criticism, and overall influence of Remy de Gourmont in England and America. While this thesis will delve into his biography of de Gourmont in chapter two, it is important to note now that Burne does a fastidious job of tracing de Gourmont's influence within America. Most notably for scholars of rhetoric, Burne makes two important connections. First and foremost is that "Kenneth Burke studied [de Gourmont's] writings on language and the 'dissociation of ideas'" (Burne 7) and that Burke produces a positive understanding of de Gourmont's concept of dissociation when he noted "the great emphasis which this method [of disassociation] places upon *division* really serves to sharpen our understanding of *identification*" (Burne 63, italics in original). Second is that Remy de Gourmont's "Probleme du Style" provides the aesthetic basis for certain rhetorical scholars. In Burne's own words, "an elaboration of [de Gourmont's] ideas can be seen in the complex

theories of aestheticians like I. A. Richards and Suzanne Langer" (110). Most important to this project, however, is the first connection made regarding de Gourmont and Burke. Unfortunately, Burne does not expound upon how identification and disassociation are relayed through Burke. While citations are provided, the claim that Burne makes (while well-taken by this writer) is never explicitly founded. Given that Burne's goal was to describe Remy de Gourmont's reach into England and America, it is understandable that he would not delve deeper to prove this claim. As such, while previously and implicitly asserted by Burne, the claim that de Gourmont's disassociation grounds Burke's identification is still largely unproven.

Selzer too concentrates on the influence of de Gourmont on Burke's earliest work, to the neglect of the way de Gourmont's ideas shaped concepts Burke worked on throughout his career. While Selzer does make connections between de Gourmont and Burke, the scope and nature of Selzer's work prevent critical examination of those connections. Burke is linked to de Gourmont, but never through means of identification and disassociation. In *Kenneth Burke in Greenwich Village: Conversing with the Moderns 1915-1931*, Selzer traces Burke's letters, writings, and life to provide a more holistic understanding of Burke and his early works. Correspondences with Malcolm Cowley, fictional works like *The White Oxen*, and Burke's years with The Dial are all taken into account.

Remy de Gourmont also makes occasional appearances within *Kenneth Burke in Greenwich Village*. Most notably is de Gourmont's appearance in conjunction with Selzer's chapter on *Counter-Statement*. Here, Selzer remarks in more depth on de Gourmont's influence not only on Burke but on the other members of "this youngest

generation" who were also influenced by de Gourmont: Richard Aldington, T. S. Eliot, Malcolm Cowley, and Ezra Pound. As with many members of "this youngest generation," Burke would appreciate de Gourmont for what he was: "a prototypical Symbolist and modern" (Selzer 141). Yet, for a man who called himself a Flaubert, it is interesting to note that, of the three men chosen as Burke's "Three Adepts" in *Counter-Statement* (namely Pater, Flaubert, and de Gourmont), de Gourmont's essay would take up half the entry (Selzer 141). Through this and other examples, Selzer helps demonstrate the strength of influence de Gourmont would have on early Burke.

Unfortunately, Selzer says little about de Gourmont and the later Burke. In fact, Selzer's joint work with Ann George, *Kenneth Burke in the 1930s*, only mentions Remy de Gourmont twice. The first is in conjunction with Burke's project "Auscultation, Creation, and Revision" where one section has Burke defending critics and writers like Eliot, I. A. Richards, and de Gourmont (George and Selzer 78). The second alludes to a connection made between Burke's perspective by incongruity and de Gourmont's own work (George and Selzer 108-9). Never, though, is identification mentioned beside de Gourmont in either of Selzer's works. Again, given the scope and nature of Selzer's works, critical examination of such a connection was not to be expected, and I do not intend to criticize those works for not doing so. Instead, I merely want to point out a still missing element in our understanding of Burke and identification.

As for other authors and works critically relating to either Burke and de Gourmont or just de Gourmont himself, little exists. In *The Rhetorical Imagination of Kenneth Burke*, Ross Wolin connects Burke to de Gourmont through Burke's first major critical essay, "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont." And, while Wolin notes that the

essay is largely overlooked by today's readers of Burke (20), his project does not delve into how this essay should matter to today's readers of Burke. Instead, Wolin presents a short summary of "Approaches" in order to inform modern readers of Burke. Nevertheless, just as previous authors had, Wolin overlooks critical connections between Burke and de Gourmont for many of the same reasons.

After considering Burne, Selzer, George, and Wolin, the Burke reader will find no other authors positing strong connections of Burke with de Gourmont outside of a statement from Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca stating that "what Remy de Gourmont terms phenomena of association and dissociation and Kenneth Burke terms identification are, in our view, simply connections and rejections of connections" (413). What remains are works that reference and utilize Remy de Gourmont and his works (aside from Burke's own, of course). These too, however, are quite lacking and mostly focus on either providing translations of de Gourmont's works or biographies of his life. Richard Aldington provides a solid example of this. In addition to translating a wide selection of de Gourmont's works, Aldington produces a critical biography of de Gourmont's life and work from which the opening quotation of this chapter derives. Beyond this, there is little attention paid to de Gourmont's ideas. In fact, this same statement could be made of the majority of texts that feature de Gourmont.

Jennifer Birkett and Juliet Simpson are the exceptions to this rule. While neither presents de Gourmont in conjunction with Burke, they do analyze the works to which de Gourmont was dedicated. Birkett focuses on ideas of decadence, history, and the politics of language in her "Fetishizing Writings: The Politics of Fictional Form in the Work of Remy de Gourmont and Josephin Peladan." Simpson, on the other hand, focuses on

symbolist illustration and visual metaphor by examining the French symbolist art magazine L'Ymagier in her aptly named article "Symbolist illustration and visual metaphor: Remy de Gourmont's and Alfred Jarry's L'Ymagier." And, while I applaud Birkett's and Simpson's presentation of de Gourmont in more contemporary works, neither provides information that would help us better understand de Gourmont in terms of Burke and vice versa. Overall, critical-theoretical connections between Kenneth Burke and Remy de Gourmont go widely unexamined.

As I have shown above, de Gourmont's intellectual contributions to Burke after *Counter-Statement* are almost never acknowledged; yet, Burke himself makes the claim in *Rhetoric of Motives* that if he had but one option to demonstrate the use of identification in language he would choose de Gourmont's essay "La Dissociation des Idées" (150). Equally important, Burke makes earlier claims in the introduction to *Permanence and Change* that his perspective by incongruity is, in fact, the "other side of Remy de Gourmont's formula for the 'dissociation of ideas'" (*liv*). Given Burke's own words, it becomes necessary to understand the workings of de Gourmont if we are to appreciate and understand Burke holistically as scholars.

Hoping that these statements, as well as the chapters to follow, establish the importance of Remy de Gourmont in Burke, I present a more focused argument: that de Gourmont's method of "disassociation" was the foundation from which Burke's contribution of "identification" to rhetoric was built. Stated differently, I posit that Remy de Gourmont's "The Disassociation of Ideas" helps initially ground the series of Kenneth Burke's thought that would produce Burke's identification. Disassociation cultivated identification.

This thesis, then, will reintroduce de Gourmont as a scholar of note and attempt to establish disassociation as a ground for Burke's identification. To do so, this thesis will present four chapters developing the chief biographical and theoretical elements in and of both Burke and de Gourmont as well as how they connect. The current chapter has focused on establishing the need to examine the theoretical connections between de Gourmont and Burke.

Chapter two will present a focused biography of de Gourmont's life, times, and selected works. Specifically, chapter two will recount significant events of de Gourmont's life in addition to reviewing de Gourmont's works on "Success and the Idea of Beauty," "Women and Language," and "The Disassociation of Ideas" (especially given Burke's confirmations that he had engaged all three). The reader should pay special mind to the review of "The Disassociation of Ideas" as this essay will be the central in exploring the critical-theoretical connections found between de Gourmont and Burke.

Chapter three will then trace and analyze Burke's mention and sometimes indirect use of de Gourmont's method of disassociation in works prior to *Rhetoric of Motives*: namely "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont," *Counter-Statement*, *Permanence and Change*, *Attitudes Toward History*, and *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. Select sections of "On Interpretation" and "Perspective by Incongruity" in *P&C* will be probed to reveal how disassociation is, in fact, the other side of perspective by incongruity. Building from this analysis, the chapter will proceed to connect perspective by incongruity to Burke's section on "Identity, Identification" in *ATH*'s Dictionary of Pivotal Terms. And, lastly, chapter three will identity Burke's use of (dis)association and identification as methods in *PLF*'s well-known "Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle."

Finally, chapter four will review Burke's identification through an examination of his *Rhetoric of Motives*. While elements of Burke's own identification/division will be explained, focus will also be placed on the significance of Burke's addition of de Gourmont's "The Disassociation of Ideas" as part of his section on the "Traditional Principles of Rhetoric." After doing so, this chapter will conclude by remarking on the limitations of de Gourmont's method of disassociation and Burke's advancement of this method through the incorporation of human relations and motivations.

CHAPTER TWO:

Remy de Gourmont: Life, Theory, and Works

While Kenneth Burke's biography and review of literature in "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont" and *Counter-Statement* are good ones, they are limited due to the times at which they were written. The reason for this might aptly be portrayed in Burke's own words: "the facts of de Gourmont's life are rare" ("Approaches" 127). And, although this may have been true in February of 1921, it is no longer the case thanks to Glenn S. Burne who had twenty more years than Burke to retrieve biographical information as well as analyze the body of translated (and un-translated) de Gourmont works. Knowing this, it would be prudent for us to turn to the writings of other scholars to formulate a better understanding of de Gourmont.

This chapter, then, will examine Remy de Gourmont in three areas: life, theory, and works. In describing de Gourmont's life, focus will be placed on the influential events that came to define de Gourmont. However, realizing that life and thought can never be completely separated, the second section of this chapter will examine the philosophy and theory of de Gourmont. While partially influenced by his life and times, the two primary areas in de Gourmont's thinking will be shown as still heavily reliant upon de Gourmont's understanding of sense and self. The final and third section of this chapter will then review three primary works of de Gourmont, "Success and the Idea of Beauty," "Women and Language," and "The Disassociation of Ideas." While Burke read all three works, "Disassociation" is the most important because of its influence on Burke's theory of identification, which is the subject of chapters three and four of this thesis.

Life

Remy de Gourmont was born on April 4, 1858 in Normandy, in the Chateau de La Motte, at Bazoches-en-Houlme. Thanks in part to the status of the Gourmont family, Remy was able to attend the Lycee at Coutances whilst still young before attending law school at the University of Caen. During his studies at Caen, Remy's instructors would come to characterize him as "having a distinguished but undisciplined mind, and as tending to make excursions into fantasy" (Burne 9). Interestingly, it was most likely de Gourmont's later disease and facial deformity that would exacerbate his lifelong excursions into fantasy.

De Gourmont's "facial drama"[1] would not occur until his mid-twenties, however. Around this time (somewhere in the early 1880's), de Gourmont would have already moved to Paris and started as an assistant librarian at the Bibliotheque Nationale. While working at the Bibliotheque Nationale, de Gourmont would continue his studies and writings to the point that Richard Aldington would assert that "this 'occupation" only meant [de Gourmont] read and wrote at a public library what he could otherwise have read and written in his own library" (1). The position of assistant librarian, then, was less than a demanding one.

Unfortunately for de Gourmont, the time between his employment at the Bibliotheque Nationale and the start of his "facial drama" would be brief. In his mid-twenties, de Gourmont would come to contract a disease that produced a revolting skin ailment similar to leprosy and was called "lupus" at the time. The disease that de

[1] This is somewhat mocking term given by commentators to this traumatic period of de Gourmont's life (Burne 10).

Gourmont likely had was not lupus, however, but a form of tuberculosis that infected the skin. This disease would "so disfigure and discolor his face as to make him nearly unrecognizable" (Burne 10). In fact, de Gourmont's facial disfigurement was so bad that even his own father was unable to recognize him (Burne 10). Due to painful experiences such as this, de Gourmont would remain locked inside of his Paris home for the next several years and thus begin his life removed from society.

Not aiding the matter of de Gourmont's retirement from society, the Bibliotheque Nationale dismissed de Gourmont from his position of assistant librarian around the same time as his facial drama. The dismissal was invoked as a response to de Gourmont's ill-received article "Le Jou-jou patriotisme" in the April 1891 edition of *Mercure de France*. Within this article, de Gourmont attacked the extreme current of patriotism occurring in France and argued against the prevailing anti-German sentiment in favor of international understanding and amity (Burne 11). Of course, the sentiment expressed by de Gourmont was not well taken by either the French press or public and thereby ensured de Gourmont's dismissal from the national library as well as his continued removal from society.

De Gourmont would remain confined for much of the 1880's, receiving only occasional visits. Deciding to overlook contemporary trends in literature, de Gourmont would devote himself to mostly to the classics while in hermitage. Pieces from Rome and Greece would become staples for de Gourmont; that is until his sudden discover of Symbolism.

As Glenn Burne tells it, de Gourmont's conversion to Symbolism was almost instantaneous.

> [De Gourmont] tells how one afternoon, quite by chance, browsing through a copy of Mallarme's *La Vogue*, he was immediately captivated by what he described as a new "aesthetic tremor" and an exquisite impression of novelty which left him filled with disgust for what he had previously written. In less than an hour, he tells us, his literary orientation was radically modified. This experience, along with his friendship with Huysmans and Villiers de l'Isle Adam, completed his conversion to Symbolism. (Burne 12)

Then, in January of 1890, de Gourmont would co-found the *Mercure de France*. Although the journal that would lead to de Gourmont's dismissal from the *Bibliotheque Nationale*, the *Mercure de France* would become prominently known as the literary journal for the new Symbolist movement. By 1893, "it had become the official Symbolist organ, largely as a result of the influence of Charles Morice and Gourmont" (Burne 12). As the voice of the journal, de Gourmont was able to direct pivotal choices about both the content and policy of the journal. These choices, then, helped to solidify both the new movement of Symbolism as well as de Gourmont's own prestige within the movement.

From this point on, de Gourmont's life would primarily be spent working at the offices of the *Mercure de France* and visiting the book-filled rooms in the rue des Saints-Peres (Burne 13). From here, de Gourmont would begin writing free verse, prose, short stories and novels. However, it is for the works of criticism that came after 1897 that de Gourmont would become more known as it was after this time that works like "The Problem of Style" and "The Disassociation of Ideas" would appear. Unfortunately, most of de Gourmont's works after 1904 would be delayed, disrupted, and sometimes stopped

altogether due to issues of health, wealth, and war (Burne 18-9). While de Gourmont seemed to regain his scholarly insight[2] by the second year of the World War I, death would intervene. On September 25, 1915, Remy de Gourmont would suffer a stroke, and, two days later, die.

Theory

With a brief summary of de Gourmont's life complete, we can now better approach and understand the philosophy and theory behind his works. Within this section of the chapter, I will examine the two main areas of de Gourmont's theory, aesthetics and sociopolitical criticism, in addition to explaining how both are grounded in de Gourmont's understanding of sense perception and the real. However, to do so will require us to acknowledge an important characteristic of de Gourmont and his works: that they are both contradictory as well as consistent.

Richard Aldington helps us in grasping what is meant by this contradictory yet consistent quality of de Gourmont's mind. In describing a passage by de Gourmont on the topic of the Classic versus the Romantic, Aldington essentially classifies de Gourmont's two primary modes of thinking.

> The one sort of mind, which [de Gourmont] calls Classic, always works outward from itself; the other sort, which he calls Romantic, always plunges deeper and deeper into itself. The one is extensive, the other intensive. Now the remarkable thing about Gourmont's mind is that it did not belong exclusively to either of

[2] De Gourmont was beginning work on *Physique des Moeurs*, his sequel to *Physique de l'Amour*.

> these types, but to both. His mind was both extensive and intensive. He was both Romantic and Classic. (5)

In short, de Gourmont's philosophy drew on both Classical and Romantic inspiration. Of course, this produced contradictions between some of de Gourmont's works and thought, but, when examined closely, his approach never becomes inconsistent. The reason behind this is hinted at in the above passage from Aldington and more fully developed by Glenn Burne. De Gourmont always started from the mind itself. Or, perhaps more accurately put, de Gourmont always started from the self. So, although the aesthetic assumptions that informed de Gourmont's approach do seem contradictory at places, he consistently made the object of his concern the self.

Given his skin condition and consequent isolation, it is not surprising that de Gourmont would focus on the self. Living as a social pariah due both to his facial drama as well as his political criticism, de Gourmont had little option but to operate and theorize as a self separate from the masses and his external environment. Yet, by doing so, de Gourmont entered into debates of epistemology and metaphysics between the Naturalists and Idealists. "Idealism-Symbolism was out to prove that reality is relative; that where the Naturalists saw certainty, absoluteness, and immutability, there was actually only possibility, appearance, and change" (Burne 33). In large part, this was due to argument over sensory perception. Naturalists believed there to be an external, knowable reality that was accurately portrayed through our sensory perceptions. Idealists (and, later, the Symbolists who would adapt and modify their stance) held that even if there were an external reality, our fallible sense perception would in no way allow us to know it. At the end of day, the only realm known to exist was the realm of self and thought.

In taking up this idealist understanding, de Gourmont was able to reach some intriguing theoretical conclusions.

> Since the fallible senses stand between man's consciousness and external phenomena, one can never truly know those phenomena in themselves—only their "representations." Thus, "the only reality is thought." Knowing that the individual is a world unto himself and that the external world exists as a projection of his own consciousness, the idealist can admit but one kind of government—anarchy—and he must ignore all "practical relativities" such as morality, sociability, the father-land, traditions, family, procreation, and so on. With social life being thus ruled out of bounds, there remains but one domain where the idealist can function, indeed where he can flourish, and that is the domain of Art. (Burne 20-1)

De Gourmont's two main areas of theory, aesthetics and sociopolitical criticism, then are a derivative of his understanding of idealism and the real therein. Fallible senses and the reality of thought frame his theory.

In the case of art, de Gourmont's theory of sense justified his theory of aesthetics. Unlike previous theories of art and aesthetics, de Gourmont's sought to abandon the general social precepts which decided good from bad and thereby allow full freedom of artistic exploration. Put succinctly, "Art must break the chains, all rules and all formulas" (Burne 21). Symbolism, and its coupling with Idealism, allowed for this. Art could operate at the level of the individual's mind, thus maximizing the liberty of the artist, and would thereby allow for the new modes of aesthetic expression. Thus, de Gourmont set Liberty and the New as the goals of his theory. For de Gourmont and his

contemporaries, free verse in poetry could be given as one such example of a new and liberating aesthetic expression born from this mode of thought.

Yet, more to the point of this project and more focused on by de Gourmont's American readers was his theoretical contributions in sociopolitical criticism developed through projects in science, philology and literary criticism. As Burne puts it, "the early Gourmont…served as an inspiring example in the war against bourgeois morality and mediocrity in art, but it was the later Gourmont whose writings on science, philology, and literary criticism furnished most of the theories and epigraphs so freely borrowed by English and American writers" (Burne 37). And, while de Gourmont's theory of the sociopolitical did borrow from a number of sources (science, philology, etc.), it still rested upon the crux of the self and the real. In short, the sociopolitical was to be considered from the perspective of the individual.

While still emphasizing the same importance of his aesthetic theory, de Gourmont's sociopolitical criticism shifted slightly from his early aesthetic theory because it understood the individual from a more scientific standpoint. As Burne explains, "in his writings on individualism and liberty...Gourmont was advocating that man recognize his subservience to his nervous system. He should find or create his own 'truths' in conformity with demands of his animal nature rather than try to accept the ready-made truths of society, the milieu" (43). The milieu was not to be trusted for sociopolitical decisions, but the individual could be because of the one truth s/he could grasp, his/her nervous system (a.k.a. the senses). Heeding these could help maximize liberties without sacrificing individuality.

De Gourmont's maxim of liberty and the individual in the sociopolitical derived, in part, from his Epicurean understanding of morality. For him, the moral would be based upon the emotional response derived from the senses.

> This morality, derived mainly from Gourmont's own nature, recognized but one law, the tyranny of the nervous system, and but one restraint, the individual conscience. There are no moral sensations or ideas, but only moral feelings. Sensations are the *facts*, and should be studied freely. But feelings, or emotions, must be examined from a moral point of view, because they are motives of action, and the only possible justification for concern for morality, which is usually indifferent to ideas and sensations, is that action must not be antisocial. This is the only limit that Gourmont gave to individual liberty. (Burne 38)

In other words, a man or woman was to seek out fully the pleasure of their senses as long as those sensory experiences where never antisocial and never solicited a negative emotional response. If either occurred, the act was "immoral."

Interestingly, such a liberal conception of morality left little room for most forms of government in de Gourmont's perspective. In fact, de Gourmont's morality seemingly prohibited any formative method concerning the sociopolitical because no straight "theory" on politics could be developed (as this might oppress the liberties and individualism of others). De Gourmont never provides a formula or program for proper governance. Instead, de Gourmont upholds the idea that an individual should be given enough freedom to discover his/her own philosophy of self-governance. Keeping in form with his previous ideas, de Gourmont openly opposed most forms of governance (democracy, capitalism, communism, socialism, etc.) in his sociopolitical criticism and

might rightly be labeled what Glenn Burne calls an "aristocratic anarchist" (51). But, regardless of the label we place on de Gourmont, the fact remains that this line of thinking out rightly affected the ideas of early 20th century American writers like Eliot, Pound, Aldington, and Burke. With his emphasis on liberty and his attempts to understand the motivations of the individual, de Gourmont presented seeds of thought in both his aesthetic and sociopolitical theories that would take root in the minds of the young moderns living in Greenwich Village.

Works

De Gourmont wrote a number of noteworthy works including *Sixtine*, *The Horses of Diomedes*, *The Book of Masks*, and *The Aesthetics of the French Language*. Although these works are important in their own right, I will focus on the three de Gourmont works that we know Burke read. For this reason, this portion of chapter two will review only three de Gourmont works: "Success and the Idea of Beauty," "Women and Language," and "The Disassociation of Ideas."

Despite its title, "Success and the Idea of Beauty" is primarily about how human beings evaluate art. Unlike earlier writings on aesthetics and art, de Gourmont takes into account the "tyranny of the nervous system" within this work. Our senses, emotions, and nervous systems frame the way we experience and evaluate art, thus they are the basis for what is thought successful and beautiful in art. Most notably for de Gourmont, though, is what portion of the nervous system propagates our evaluative response for beauty and success. For him, the answer can found within the genital nervous system.

As de Gourmont puts it, “the sole natural end of man is reproduction” (86). Procreation formulates our comprehension of the success and beauty of art. It is for this reason that “the only generally accepted works of art are those which show, quite simply, the human body in its nakedness” (Gourmont 84). De Gourmont then points to the work of Greek sculptors, who, by producing nude sculptures, have positioned themselves above all discussion of artistic success and beauty; they and their sculptures, according to de Gourmont, are universally accepted as successful due to their blatant sexual appeal (84). In short, sexual urges and responses develop our understanding of pleasure and thereby our evaluation of art.

Nevertheless, de Gourmont holds that there is still a form of emotional response that is not purely sexual, but merely a derivative of it. It is the aesthetic emotion and it is the element that separates success from beauty. “Success and beauty [have] a common origin in the emotions, [but] their sole difference being the difference of the nervous systems in which they have evolved” (Gourmont 88). According to de Gourmont, success is an immediate experience of pleasurable or not pleasurable. Beauty, on the other hand, takes a detour through the intelligence before turning back in on itself towards genital emotion (Gourmont 89). As such, the average man scarcely has a conception of beauty and instead judges from the criteria of success, a.k.a. is it pleasurable? The elite critics or aesthetes, whom de Gourmont identifies as “the caste of the aesthetics,” however, judge based upon an aesthetic emotion to determine the beauty of a work.

Yet, with the aesthetic emotion (and beauty therein) being a derivation, it does not hold as much weight as the sheer fact of a work’s success; for, as de Gourmont states at

the beginning of "Success and the Idea of Beauty," "success is a fact" (74). It is a fact contingent upon the times and the person, but success, for de Gourmont, is a fact nevertheless because it is a direct sensory experience. According to de Gourmont, beauty is indirect and filtered through the intelligence and cannot be considered as fact. Noting this, de Gourmont is then able to arrive at his most important conclusion; "there is no absolute aesthetic" (99). Each man and woman is to work out the beautiful for him or herself as there can be no ultimate rules that decide the beautiful. In the end, it is not a question of what is beauty for de Gourmont, but instead a question of what moves the individual. In de Gourmont's own words, "that which moves us is beautiful; but we can be moved only in the measure of our emotional receptivity, and according to the state of our nervous system" (99). If I were to put it succinctly, success is a fact for de Gourmont; beauty is a motive.

De Gourmont's understanding of beauty as motive helps to explain his less than flattering understanding of women in "Women and Language." Unfortunately, within this piece we begin to see an ugly side of de Gourmont in what Jennifer Birkett rightly labels as his misogyny (930). In reading de Gourmont's literary works, one will find that women are often the objects of sensual desire and are the primary means to satisfying those desires. This objectification of women does tone down a bit in later works, but even in social commentaries, like "Women and Language," the woman's role is secondary to the man's. This is not to say that women are without value, but de Gourmont does seem to hold onto the idea that women are merely supports for men.

As already mentioned, this misogynistic mentality plays out in "Women and Language." Women are given a more prominent and essential role only to be limited by

a biological myth of woman's subservience to man that de Gourmont seems to take as truth. Birkett summarizes it best when she states that "[de Gourmont] declared that the whole of civilization depended on women, conservers and transmitters of the cultural heritage, of the language skills that permit cultural development...but they are, he emphasizes, only transmitters and are incapable of original creativity" (932). Women are essential as guardians of language and culture but can do little to advance it.

De Gourmont comes to this conclusion based upon an evaluation of the development and sustainment of language itself. According to de Gourmont, "speech is feminine" because it is a "woman's prattle" that a child hears early in its development (120). This prattle serves to introduce and immerse the child into symbol systems of language. The child starts through imitation of the mother and then begins to make the cultural associations between specific words and objects, ideas, etc. The mother acts as corrector during this time period and makes sure that the child develops the correct language associations. In this way, "woman's great intellectual task is teaching the language" (133). In no way, though, is woman's role to advance the language or the culture that stems from it; and, in de Gourmont's world, it is likely that she cannot. In de Gourmont's words, "woman has little capacity for verbal innovation" for she is "born to conserve" and to this end "she performs her role to perfection" (123). Woman is keeper and proctor of language, but she is not the advancer of it.

Overall, "Women and Language" presents a significant evaluation of the role of women in sustaining language and, through it, culture. However, in doing so, de Gourmont also perpetuates a biological myth of woman as secondary citizen for she has not the capacity to create and advance, only mimic. In fact, "all mimetic art is the work

of women" in de Gourmont's view (128). The one saving grace for this work on women and language is the contribution it makes in the conception that "language begins with a lie" (Gourmont 129). This idea, though now no longer novel, holds that language does not directly correspond to reality and sensations and therefore can never be fully true. Furthermore, man and woman can utilize language to convey a sensation or emotion that they may, in fact, not be feeling. Language then acts as an argument for Idealism over Naturalism because it demonstrates an understood separation from our immediate reality. "Taking language such as it appears to us, and supposing each word to correspond to an object, it may be said that, if there existed a man who had never lied, that man never spoke" (Gourmont 129-30). In short, language begins with a lie because there is never a direct correspondence between a symbol and the object, idea, etc. it signifies.

So, while de Gourmont's "Women and Language" may represent his misogynistic characteristics, it also shows us one of Burke's earlier reads in philology and language. It demonstrates how language never corresponds one-to-one with reality, and, at the very least, the idea that "language begins with a lie" helps us in grasping the comparatives made by Aldington (14) and Burne (110) between de Gourmont's works and C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards' *Meaning of Meaning*.

With the review of "Women and Language" complete, we turn to the last and most important work of de Gourmont that Burke was to read. Proclaimed by Aldington as de Gourmont's most ambitious contribution (14) and heavily influencing the work of Ezra Pound (Sieburth 77-8), "The Disassociation of Ideas" is considered by most to be de Gourmont's most important work. In it, de Gourmont provides a method for criticism to break down and closely examine commonly held ideas and truths.

To start "The Disassociation of Ideas," de Gourmont notes that there are three options available to the thinking individual. "One can either accept current ideas and associations of ideas, just as they are, or else undertake, on his own account, new associations or, what is rarer, original disassociations" (Gourmont 3). In other words, it was not the creation of new associations between ideas that was interesting or even noteworthy, for "there are no ideas so remote, no images so ill-assorted, that an easy habit of association cannot bring them together" (Gourmont 4). Instead, disassociation and the breaking apart of what de Gourmont terms "commonplaces" and "truths" were what critical energies should be invested in and expended upon.

According to de Gourmont, "commonplaces" are associations between ideas that are so strong that they seem eternal, so given that they seem beyond contestation (5). Commonplaces[3] are truths for all peoples of all times. "Most truths which travel the world...may be regarded as commonplaces, that is to say, associations of ideas common to a large number of men, none of whom would dare deliberately to dissociate them" (Gourmont 6). Commonplaces are the ideas that hold up segments of society and allow for continuing habits of thought.

Yet, for an idea to become a commonplace, an association must first be made. De Gourmont demonstrates how these associations are made by noting the association of Byzantium and Rome with decadence.

> A great many commonplaces have an historic origin. One day two ideas became united under the influence of events, and this union proved more or less lasting. Having seen with its own eyes the death-struggle of Byzantium, Europe coupled

[3] Commonplaces could also be rightly considered as an extension of Aristotle's *topoi* except commonplaces would only operate at the level of ideas.

> these two ideas, Byzantium-Decadence, which became a commonplace, an incontestable truth for all men who read and write, and thus necessarily for all the rest—for those who cannot verify the truths offered them. From Byzantium, the association of ideas was extended to the whole Roman Empire, which is now, for sage and respectful historians, nothing but a succession of decadences. (Gourmont 8)

In other words, a common association between ideas is created and then accepted by a large enough group of influential people that it becomes a truth and, eventually, a commonplace.

Still, these truths and commonplaces are not made from verifiable evidence but from the self-interests of men and women. As de Gourmont explains, "man associates ideas, not at all in accordance with verifiable exactitude, but with his pleasure and his interest. That is why most truths are merely prejudices" (11). Recalling de Gourmont's understanding of self, optimizing pleasure becomes one of the major factors in maximizing liberty and is the basis for most action. In creating associations, certain means to or modes of pleasure become accepted as truths; but, at the same time prejudices are formed against those other means or modes not generally accepted. Thus, those men and women who gain from the current set of associations, the current truths, are opposed to disassociation. In order to maximize liberty and pleasure for the individual, however, disassociations must be made so as to acknowledge the given prejudices and interests within associations. Through disassociating, the prejudices are laid bare and liberties of the individual are increased. In time, the disassociation of a "truth" may even lead to its death, which occurs when "it has been shown that the

relations between the elements [of an association] are habitual, and not necessary" (18). When it is acknowledged that a truth was merely a preference/prejudice, the truth is dead. But disassociation is needed before such an end can be met.

After explaining the place of prejudice in association and the need for disassociation to correct it, de Gourmont goes on to examine and disassociate other truths of his time. Most notably, de Gourmont examines truths of carnal pleasure-procreation, soldier-honor, beauty-feminine, and the idea of justice. Though it might be useful to examine all of these associations at length, I will choose to focus on the disassociation that will help us best understand de Gourmont's method, the disassociation of justice.

De Gourmont disassociates the idea of justice by considering two contradictory aspects of it, equilibrium and punishment. De Gourmont states that, when properly considered, the idea of justice is nothing more than the idea of equilibrium. "Justice is the dead-point in a series of acts--the ideal point at which contrary forces neutralize each other to produce inertia" (21). Problematically, though, is how the idea of justice works to create inequality through its incitement of punishment. Punishment necessarily forms an inequality through labels of guilt and innocence (Gourmont 22). De Gourmont goes on to question how such a thing as punishment could be contained in the idea of justice.

> Why should not the imbecile, who let himself by robbed, be punished instead of the robber, who has certain excuses to offer? That is what justice would decree if, instead of a theological conception, it were still, as at Sparta, an imitation of nature. Nothing exists save by virtue of disequilibrium, of injustice. Every existence is a theft practiced upon other existences. (Gourmont 23)

Here, de Gourmont returns to one of his three large philosophical influences, Nietzsche, and proposes that the idea of justice promotes "simultaneously with the punishment of the guilty, the extermination of the strong, and, simultaneously with the non-punishment of the innocent, the exaltation of the humble" (23). The idea of justice allows the binding of the strong through the innocence of the weak. The above disassociation shows, for de Gourmont, the meaninglessness of the contemporary conception of justice because it both fails as a coherent idea and is revealed as a prejudice in favor of the weak rather than a necessity of nature.

Overall, de Gourmont's method of disassociation, while rarely agreeable to the majority, forms a useful mechanism for determining what lies within an accepted truth as well as the sociopolitical repercussions those associated elements within a truth carry. It provides a means to examine widely accepted ideas so that, in Aldington's words, even "a candid and guileless mind" could understand the prejudices inherent in any commonplace (16). The disassociation of ideas, as such, may not be the most original method for criticizing truths, but it is one of the most approachable and understandable. It may be for these reasons that Burke chose to return to "The Disassociation of Ideas" in his later works.

CHAPTER THREE:

Perspective by Incongruity and Identification

This chapter of the thesis will attempt to follow the theoretical traces of Remy de Gourmont's "The Disassociation of Ideas" in Burke's texts preceding *The Rhetoric of Motives*. In explicitly citing de Gourmont's dissociative method and eventually labeling disassociation as the other side to perspective by incongruity, Burke grants a theoretical (i.e., theory-based, not empirical) connective to his comments in *The Rhetoric of Motives* that elevates the importance of "The Disassociation of Ideas" in processes of identification. Put briefly, perspective by incongruity is the method that allows Burke to progress from de Gourmont's theory of disassociation into his own theories of identity and identification.

To show how disassociation is linked to perspective by incongruity and, by extension, identification, this chapter will first examine Burke's early encounters with de Gourmont as well as his article on de Gourmont, featured both in *The Dial* and *Counter-Statement*, "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont." Following a review of Burke's "Approaches," this chapter will then explore three separate texts to show how disassociation progresses to identification through perspective by incongruity. The first book, *Permanence and Change*, will provide us with Burke's own statement on disassociation's relationship to perspective by incongruity as well as present the important tie between rebirth and perspective by incongruity. Next, we will examine Burke's "Dictionary of Pivotal Terms" in *Attitudes Toward History* by analyzing Burke's entry "Identity, Identification." It will be shown within this entry that the pivotal extension beyond associations and into identifications is made by perspective by

incongruity. Last, this chapter will end with a look at Burke's well-known examination of identifications, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle." In "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," we will discover the role of Hitler's rebirth in forming new identifications as well as Burke's various critiques and commentaries on Hitler's problematic associations and identifications.

First Encounters

Finding de Gourmont & The Dial

Kenneth Burke's first encounters with Remy de Gourmont occurred between his later high school years and final college years.[4] As Jack Selzer explains:

> What Burke would 'begin studying' in preparation for a writing career, of course, was what he had already been studying for several years: the modern writers and artists he had been reading and hearing about since high school in Pittsburgh and classes at Ohio State as well as at Columbia—particularly Continental writers like Mann and Flaubert, the French Symbolist poets, and the Anglo-American poets whose verse was patterned after the Symbolists. (61)

De Gourmont, of course, would be included among both the Continental writers and the French Symbolist poets. And, at the very least, we know that Burke was reading de Gourmont by March 13 of 1916 because of a correspondence Burke had had with Louis Wilkinson (Selzer 141).

[4] In his informal chronology of Kenneth Burke's activities, Selzer goes on to note that it was most likely Lugwig Lewisohn, a faculty member at Ohio State University, who introduced Burke to the works of Remy de Gourmont in February of 1916 (185).

Later, in the June of 1919, Burke wrote to Cowley about summer in Candor, New York. Birds, flowers, fishes, and berries were abundant in Candor at this time of the year, and young Burke was having a difficult time accomplishing his reading. "So far, I have done very little reading here. I tried to get through *Sixtine*, but for some reason or other, could not get into it, and gave it up after a time. The main value of the book was that it encouraged me in my own venture. Being at present in a virulent form-over-substance phase, I was irritated by de Gourmont's continual excursions; he has all the time in the world" (Jay 67). While seemingly not the greatest compliment to de Gourmont, Burke's lack of interest in reading *Sixtine* likely arose from other sources. His marriage to Lily Batterham had just taken place in May of that same year (Selzer 188), and his attempts to write and publish his fictional works were likely at the forefront of his mind. Still, de Gourmont's *Sixtine* managed to spur Burke into his own writings as he notes in his letter to Cowley. In fact, Burke would continue to find similar innovation from the writings of de Gourmont upon his employment at Scofield Thayer's and Sibley Watson's journal, *The Dial*.

Thayer and Watson emerged from similar academic and economic upbringings; both men came from great wealth and both would attend Harvard University. While at Harvard, Thayer would study with the likes of e. e. cummings and had previously attended Milton Academy with T. S. Eliot (Selzer 116). Through these academic interactions, "Thayer developed a taste for Continental Post-Impressionists and writers…he particularly venerated Picasso, Joyce, Freud, and a number of German writers" (Selzer 116). Watson, on the other hand, would cultivate a different taste in academic and poetic thought. In fact, Watson would be correctly identified as "a student

of the Symbolist poets" (Selzer 116). Given both Thayer's and Watson's interest in the arts, it would come as no surprise that their purchase of *The Dial* would take it in a different direction. The new *Dial* concentrated on modern art and literature rather than politics and was able to secure the works of various American and Continental moderns like cummings, O'Keeffe, Pound, Mann, Picasso, Joyce, Eliot, and even Remy de Gourmont (Selzer 116-7).

Given the work exhibited within the new *Dial*, a young Burke, with his taste for modern art and literature, would have a hard time overlooking the publication. And, as fate would have it, Burke would not only publish within *The Dial* but also act as editor for the periodical. Burke's stories "Mrs. Maecenas," "The Soul of Kajn Tafha," "The Excursion," and "Portrait of an Arrived Critic" were all accepted for publication within *The Dial* in January of 1920 and marked the beginning of a series of submissions (Selzer 190). Central to the research project of this paper, Burke would publish an essay entitled "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont" as the lead article in the February 1921 edition of *The Dial*.

Approaching Remy de Gourmont

In "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont," Burke examines Remy de Gourmont in both his life and his work. At the point of "Approaches" publication, de Gourmont was already well known[5] as a French Symbolist and critic. Also a writer of poems and novels, de Gourmont regularly commented on the place of beauty, poetry, and literary aesthetics within his works; and, it is on these grounds that Burke's interests in writing his article for *The Dial* were likely based.

[5] In fact, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot were both already great admirers of de Gourmont's works.

As it reads, Burke's "Approaches" is both a condensed biography of de Gourmont as well as a critical commentary on some of his works. To begin his first section of the article, Burke describes how, for de Gourmont, the purpose of art is art, *l'art-por-l'art*. In part, "de Gourmont always had much too strong a detestation for democratic standards to be anything but a disciple of Art for Art's Sake" (Burke, "Approaches" 126). And, in addition to this, de Gourmont's Art for Art's Sake also derived from his understanding and explanation of the human creature. As Burke later explains, "de Gourmont not only admired the purest activities of the intellect, and the play of sensibilities, but also recognized the dignity of appetites, understood that they are an excellent base on which to erect the superstructure of intelligence and sensibility" ("Approaches" 132). And, "to be an artist is to feed an appetite" (Burke, "Approaches" 126). In particular, the artist feeds an appetite for beauty, which by de Gourmont's terms is the basis of art.

Burke does not focus for too long on matters of Art & Beauty and instead uses them as a starting point for how to understand de Gourmont's writings and thoughts. Because de Gourmont operated on Art for Art's Sake, he was able to immerse himself in processes of thought that differed from norms of the time. "The theories of individualism in art resulted in his being at liberty to develop his medium as he saw fit; but the unconscious intention behind his work, the desire to communicate, checked the absurdity of the theories, with the result that we have from de Gourmont some forty volumes of graceful and intelligent writing in a multitude of mediums" (Burke, "Approaches" 127). In addition to his individualism in art, de Gourmont's individualism in life also insured "the liberty of his writing" (Burke, "Approaches" 127). As Burke describes it, the uneventful and somewhat isolated nature of de Gourmont's experiences is what allowed

him to write as he did, for "until just before his death, there was no element of social experience strong enough to disturb him with its prejudices" ("Approaches" 127). For many years, de Gourmont lived alone with little other than his own books for company.

After claiming how de Gourmont's writings were born from his isolation, Burke takes the stance of any good practitioner of critical review and proceeds to establish its basis by recounting de Gourmont's life in further detail. Unfortunately, Burke finds there is little to report for "the facts of de Gourmont's life are rare" ("Approaches" 127). What Burke is able to surmise is as follows. First, Remy de Gourmont was born at the Chateau de la Motte in Bazoches-en-Houlme on April 4th, 1858 (Burke, "Approaches" 127). At the age of ten, de Gourmont would move to a manor at Mesnil-Villeman until the age he would come to study law at Caen after "showing an early aptitude at the *lycee*" (Burke, "Approaches" 127). While at Caen, de Gourmont would also continue to pursue his interest in literature. But, it was not until 1883 that de Gourmont would finally come to Paris to "begin his life as a man of letters" and almost immediately become employed at the Bibliotheque Nationale (Burke, "Approaches" 128).

During the next eight years of de Gourmont's life, he would continue working at the Bibliotheque Nationale until the publication of his article "Le Joujou Patriotisme" in the *Mercure de France*. The article was not well received and actually led to the end of his connection with the Bibliotheque Nationale. Around this same time, de Gourmont began to suffer from "a malady which is alluded to only vaguely by his friends, but which kept him for the most of his life confined to his rooms in Rue des Saints-Peres" (Burke, "Approaches" 128). It was from here on that de Gourmont would become cloistered and submerged into the world of books. While continuing to read and write for his remaining

years, de Gourmont would eventually die in September of 1915 from cerebral hemorrhaging.

With this brief overview of de Gourmont's life complete, Burke begins the second section of his "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont," and it is here that connections to the future works of Burke start to emerge. First in this section is the connection that Burke makes between de Gourmont and Sigmund Freud. As Burke puts it, "although I do not recall his ever mentioning the name of a psychoanalyst—and [de Gourmont] is always frank about his sources—the theories of Freud and his epigons are continually finding expressions in his work" ("Approaches" 131). Of course, that Burke makes this connection for himself is important when arguing for the residual literary effects between de Gourmont and Burke. That he links the workings of Freud, who is a cornerstone for many of Burke's own approaches, to the workings of de Gourmont helps to signify the importance and esteem for which Burke held de Gourmont. Burke's later indirect praise of de Gourmont in the article only helps to reinforce this belief.

The second connection that Burke makes in this section of his article is an important one in that it deals with de Gourmont's method of disassociation;[6] for, as Burke puts it, "de Gourmont is a dissociator" ("Approaches" 132). To be recalled later in Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*, de Gourmont's essay "The Disassociation of Ideas" deals with the abstract associations made between terms and/or concepts and how those associations either can or should be disassociated. De Gourmont produces examples of this method by breaking down commonplaces like soldier-honor, crime-remorse, future-progress, etc. (Burke, "Approaches" 132). In short, de Gourmont goes through and

[6] To note, Burke even claims that "de Gourmont discovered himself for his critics when he used the word 'dissociations'" (132). Most likely, Burke would also stand in as one of these aforementioned critics.

examines ideas based on so-called "given" associations, which de Gourmont terms "commonplaces," and breaking down those existing pairings through disassociation.

As will be mentioned later, de Gourmont's method seems the foothold for some of Burke's own approaches. Rather than take ideas as commonplaces or truths, Burke disassociates those commonplaces. Good examples of this can be seen across Burke's various analyses of art, scapegoating, and history. His well-known "Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" also demonstrates the use of disassociation regularly through examinations of associations made between the Dehorned Siegfried and the Germany people as well as analogous[7] connections made between poisoned blood and the Jewish people.

The third section of Burke's "Approaches" assesses de Gourmont's writings in verse and narrative. Here, Burke gives an overview of de Gourmont's theme in stories. Stated briefly, de Gourmont's writings regularly deal with some form of transgression, like that of blasphemy. The reason Burke gives for this is simple; "an author who lives most of his life in his head must perform his transgressions on paper" ("Approaches" 133). And, although there is a reoccurring theme, this is not to say that de Gourmont's writings grew dry for Burke for, with de Gourmont, no two writings held the same formula. In all likelihood, these shifts in formula were caused by something Burke noted himself: "and scattered in among this pliant fiction, are [de Gourmont's] criticisms, grammatical writings, works of scientific research, philosophical essays, notes on contemporary society, discussions of art and literature, and an occasional poem" ("Approaches" 134). In this way, de Gourmont's approach is similar to the approach that Burke would later take himself. Discussions of art, literature, contemporary society,

[7] For, the simplest method of association is done through analogy (de Gourmont 8).

philosophy, scientific research, and criticism would all appear in Burke's collected works scattered throughout his poetry, criticism, narrative, and theory.

The final section of "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont" focuses on the decline of de Gourmont's writings during World War I. Whereas de Gourmont's previous self-removal from society had enlightened his writings, his reentry into societal affairs marked a decline in his intellectual endeavors for Burke. As Burke explains:

> In La Creation Subconsciente, [de Gourmont] remarks that a man loses his personality in acting sympathetically with a great number of people. Thus, de Gourmont himself furnished us with reasons to distrust his sudden blaze of patriotism. And whatever may be said in favour of a blaze of patriotism, we have it on his own authority that it can hardly be admired as an aid to greater clarity and style of thought. ("Approaches" 136)

In other words, de Gourmont turned away from his own methods to join in the cause of French patriotism. In so doing, de Gourmont abandoned his notions of disassociation, for in patriotism "the enemy was *always* wrong" (Burke, "Approaches" 137, emphasis in the original). Stated differently, de Gourmont was "helping to nourish the association, enemy-turpitude" rather than disassociate the ideas and examine what hid behind them (Burke, "Approaches" 137). For Burke, the loss of de Gourmont's intellectual approach seemed a tragic one. During war, it was impossible to remove oneself from the affairs of the world; yet, Burke believed that de Gourmont could have returned to the world with his methodology intact. Sadly, de Gourmont's death left little chance for him to rebound from this shortcoming.

Even with the de Gourmont's end-life shortcomings, Burke still saw it fit to include in the second edition of the *Counter-Statement* a modified version of "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont" in the section titled "Three Adepts of 'Pure' Literature." In addition to making up nearly half of the section on the three adepts and containing the entire original "Approaches" article, Burke's "Adepts" adds comment and praise which shows how the importance of de Gourmont's dissociative approach has solidified in Burke's mind.

> It is regrettable that De Gourmont did not carry his dissociative method further into the realm of literary criticism. The method was clearly a companion discovery to symbolism, which sought its effects precisely by utilizing, more programmatically than in any previous movement, the clusters of associations surrounding the important words of a poem or fiction. And such writers as James Joyce and Gertrude Stein are clearly making associative and dissociative processes a pivotal concern of their works. Any technical criticism of our methodological authors of today *must* concern itself with the further development and schematization of such ideas as De Gourmont was considering. (Burke, *Counter-Statement* 23-24, emphasis added)

Here, it must be noted that Burke continues to find de Gourmont's approach not only useful, but, more importantly, pivotal to the development of criticism. Believing that some authors/critics were already inadvertently following de Gourmont's lead, Burke only thought it fair to encourage others to follow de Gourmont's example. And, as the following sections will show, Burke would also follow de Gourmont's example in developing his own criticism and concepts.

Perspective by Incongruity

The connection of perspective by incongruity to de Gourmont was first noted by Ann George and Jack Selzer: "Burke traced his conception of perspective by incongruity not only to Nietzsche and Bergson but also to the aesthete par excellence, Remy de Gourmont" (108). As George and Selzer point out, while de Gourmont's work was an influence, others also influenced Burke. Nietzsche is especially notable as Burke references him regularly through Part II of *Permanence and Change*. However, this does not negate de Gourmont as a point of influence. Instead, it seemingly reinforces the placement of de Gourmont here. De Gourmont was heavily influenced by Nietzsche, and Burke was well aware of this. As Burke wrote in his *Dial* article on de Gourmont, "he recognized that Nietzsche was one of the most important moralists of the time; and further, there is Nietzsche in every sentence [de Gourmont] wrote" (Burke, "Approaches" 137). It would only make sense that Burke should combine the complementary workings of Nietzsche and de Gourmont to develop his perspective by incongruity.

Adding to this is Burke's own statement on the matter. In the April 1953 prologue to *Permanence and Change*, Burke reflects upon the development of his concept "perspective by incongruity" and reveals its relationship to de Gourmont's "Disassociation of Ideas."

> The concept [of perspective by incongruity], as we see it now, was the other side of Remy de Gourmont's formula for the "dissociation of ideas." De Gourmont was concerned with the methodic blasting apart of verbal particles that had been considered inseparable; "perspective by incongruity" refers to the methodic

> merger of particles that had been considered mutually exclusive. (Burke, *P&C liv-lv*)

Perspective by incongruity and the disassociation of ideas act as complementary processes of criticism. One concerns itself with building impious associations and the other with breaking down associations that have been granted piety.[8] Recognizing this complementary relationship will aid in grasping Burke's perspective by incongruity, de Gourmont's unseen presence in it, and, in later sections of this chapter, their connection to identification.

This said, let us now turn to featured *Permanence and Change* passages on perspective by incongruity. *Permanence and Change* is a continuation of Burke's projects in demonstrating the overlap between the aesthetic and the sociopolitical motives of his time. Burke was attempting to show that the aesthetic was always a realm of social and/or political persuasion. Burke's fundamental message in *Permanence and Change* is this: "the aesthetic is inevitably and productively grounded in its specific and cultural location and, thus, in specific sociopolitical practices" (George and Selzer 101). Art could not operate separate from persuasion.

To show this was the case, Burke divided *Permanence and Change* into three parts, each with a different heading. Part I is titled "On Interpretation"; Part II is "Perspective by Incongruity"; and Part III is "The Basis of Simplification." And though Part I (which features Burke's comments on occupational psychosis and trained incapacity) and Part III are necessary parts of Burke's project in *Permanence and*

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[8] Piety is being used in this sentence in the same manner which Burke uses the term in *P& C*. In other words, "piety is *the sense of what properly goes with it*" (Burke, *P& C* 74).

Change, our focus will be placed on the section which most correlates with the work of de Gourmont, Part II. Whereas Part I discusses our "orientations," or our perspectives on how the world does/should operate based upon our motives and ideologies, Part II discusses translating those previous orientations into new orientations. Put differently, Part II focuses on the transitional state between orientations (Burke, *P&C* 69).

To explain the transition between orientations, Burke introduces secularized versions of "piety" and "impiety" as well as his all-important "perspective by incongruity." For Burke, "piety is a system-builder" that gives a "*sense of what properly goes with what*" (*P&C* 74). On a very basic level, examples of pieties would be that humans are players of card games and birds can be found most often in the sky. These meet our perceptions and expectations of reality. Impiety, on the other hand, is the violation of what properly does with what; it is an association that does not adhere to our current orientation of reality--dogs playing a game of cards or birds regularly swimming underwater.

Impieties force change in perspective. Yet, some impieties are more easily accepted than others depending upon the system of orientation (we may admit to penguins as birds, but very few of us are prepared to come home to our pets playing cards). Perspective by incongruity attempts to adjoin through association ideas, concepts, and/or vocabulary that are regularly accepted as mutually exclusive in order to create, and sometimes redefine, impiety. To do this, perspective by incongruity extends "the use of a term by taking from the context in which it was habitually used and applying to another [context]" in an attempt to violate previous associations between a term and its meanings (Burke, *P&C* 89-90). Burke provides various examples of perspective by incongruity

throughout Part II of *Permanence and Change*. Burke notes Veblen's term "trained incapacity" as presenting planned incongruity because "our notions of training naturally suggest capacity rather than incapacity" (*P&C* 91). Burke also notes the vocabulary of the economist when describing money saved as "postponed consumption" as a mode of incongruity (*P&C* 122-3).

However, the perspectives by incongruity that Burke presents about *thoroughness-terrorism*, and *diplomacy-muddling through* appear the most reflective of de Gourmont's disassociation of ideas. As this is perspective by incongruity, however, Burke prefers association to disassociation. With these two sets of terms, Burke creates associations between what, at first, appear to be unlinked terms. For example, in associating thoroughness to terrorism, Burke claims that "*terrorism* is the word for *thoroughness* when applied to the category of warfare" and "that *thoroughness* is the word for the militant, combative integrity of terror when applied to the category of workmanship" (*P&C* 108). For Burke, terrorism and thoroughness can be understood as "merely two different manifestations of an identical process" (*P&C* 108). It is in this manner that Burke utilizes association to create perspective by incongruity.

This doesn't mean that disassociation does not occur within his examples of perspective by incongruity, though. In fact, when Burke provides incongruity between *lion-cat*, he first disassociates in the same manner as de Gourmont. De Gourmont pointed to the contradictory elements associated within the idea of justice (21-24), and Burke points to the contradictory elements associated with the conception of lion.

> The lion, if the usual psychoanalytic theory of symbolization is correct, is the male or father symbol *par excellence*. Yet the lion is scientifically included in the

> cat family, whereas the cat emotionally is feminine. In both great poetry and popular usage, it is associated with female attributes. Here we have, in our rational categories, an association which runs entirely counter to the associations of our emotional categories. A linkage emotionally appropriate becomes rationally inappropriate. (Burke, *P&C* 72-1)

In other words, all the characteristics attributed to a lion speak to that of masculinity and patriarchy. The fact that C. S. Lewis choose a lion as his representation of Christ adds to this association even today. Yet, the lion is a cat, a category of animal that is associated with the feminine. As such, the scientific categorization does not correspond with the prevailing poetic categorizations of lion-cat. Burke later suggests that a poet might rend asunder this pious association of lion-cat through an impious association of lion-dog[9] (*P&C* 90). Such an impious association would provide the needed perspective by incongruity.

Still, Burke's perspective by incongruity relies more on association than disassociation, as was already introduced through his associations of thoroughness-terrorism and diplomacy-muddling.

> *Thoroughness* and *terrorism*--one a word linked with all our *good* associations, the other falling wholly in the category of the *bad*. Or suppose I similarly noted a connection between English *diplomacy* and the philosophy of *muddling through*. To *muddle through* is to be not over-exact, to let events shape themselves in part, to make up one's specific policies as one goes along, in accordance with the unforeseen newnesses that occur in the course of events, instead of approaching

[9] Burke admits that "for my own part, I shall never forget my great resentment as a child upon learning that lions were cats, whereas to me they were purely and simply the biggest dogs" (*Permanence* 73).

> one's problem with an entire program laid out rigidly in advance. Is not this the ideal equipment of the diplomat? (Burke, *P&C* 108).

As Burke hints at, the associating of these two sets of terms is problematic because their linkage combines categories of *good* and *bad*, categories that should be kept mutually exclusive. Associating these terms, thoroughness-terrorism and diplomacy-muddling through, allows Burke to provide perspective by incongruity not only surrounding these concepts, but the focal perspective which binds them, process (*P&C* 108). Here referring to historical methods based in pattern and reoccurring processes, Burke explains that similarities built by the perspective of process can be just as faulty as previous perspectives. Focus on pattern and process merely provides new channels of analogical extension that are accompanied by their own problematic pieties and impieties.

Keeping all of these examples of perspective by incongruity in mind, we now turn to an association Burke himself made between perspective by incongruity and the concept of rebirth. According to a footnote from Burke, the rebirth and perspective by incongruity are, in fact, synonymous[10] (*P&C* 154). Rebirth and perspective by incongruity are both processes of conversion that allow for reorientation. The most famous example of rebirth might be that of Saul-Paul; and, it is a rebirth that Burke visits in *Permanence and Change* with commentary that "it is in Paul that we find the phenomena of conversion at their intensest" because "in a few seconds a symbolic reconstruction that may sometimes require years, and even generations" is accomplished (156). While only lasting a paragraph here, the Saul-Paul conversion would return in future Burke texts. Still, our focus here should be less on the person selected as a point of

[10] Jack Selzer and Ann George also note this in their book *Kenneth Burke in the 1930s* (127).

rebirth and more on the point that there was a person, not an idea, selected. With perspective by incongruity synonymous to rebirth, Burke's selection here of Saul-Paul indicates the possibility for perspective by incongruity to work at more than just the level of ideas, but at the level of the human being. Stated differently, Burke's selection of Saul-Paul demonstrates how the use of rebirth would foreshadow identification as early as *Permanence & Change*. Identification takes place in and between human beings and Saul-Paul is just that, a human being. Furthermore, since de Gourmont's disassociation influenced perspective by incongruity and perspective by incongruity is synonymous with rebirth, (by the transitive property) de Gourmont's disassociation can be understood as having an early hand in Burke's identification.

Identity, Identification

Burke's next book would come in 1937 with the release of *Attitudes Toward History*, and it is within this text's "Dictionary of Pivotal Terms" that the theoretical connective between perspective by incongruity (and vicariously Remy de Gourmont) and identification continues to emerge. More strongly Marxist in overtone than the preceding two books, *Attitudes Toward History* "targeted Marxists even more directly and practically" (George and Selzer 143). Though returning to similar points contained in *Counter-Statement* and *Permanence and Change*, Burke wanted to engage the audiences who had overlooked his previous works. By focusing more on both historical and audience analysis, Burke hoped to grab the attention of Marxist readers.[11]

[11] Though some Marxists readers, like Sidney Hook, would not take too kindly to Burke's approach in *ATH*. For more details see Sidney Hook's review of *Attitudes Toward History* in the December 1937 issue of *Partisan Review*.

The addition of the book's "Dictionary of Pivotal Terms" was made in an attempt to clarify the vast amount of new and foreign terms to Marxist readers. Since *Attitudes Toward History* recommended "Freud as a necessary ancillary to Marxist analysis," readers, Marxist or otherwise, might find themselves perplexed by both the Freudian terminology utilized as well as Burke's own terminology. The "Dictionary of Pivotal Terms" was introduced as a means to remedy this likely complication.

Contained within the "Dictionary" are terms like "alienation," "caustic stretching," "symbols of authority," "transcendence," "rituals of rebirth," and even "perspective by incongruity." Of particular interest to our current project of tracing "The Disassociation of Ideas" to identification is Burke's entry "Identity, Identification." Within this entry, Burke begins his transfer from perspective by incongruity and its operation in the realm of ideas to identification and its operation in the realm of human relations.

"Identity, Identification" spends ten pages (263-273) explaining the term and its importance to Burke's work in *Attitudes Toward History*. To begin, Burke presents bourgeois naturalism's understanding of identity. According to Burke, "bourgeois naturalism in its most naïve manifestation made a blunt distinction between 'individual' and 'environment,' hence leading automatically to the notion that an individual's 'identity' is something private, peculiar to himself" (*ATH* 263). Bourgeois psychologists eventually recognized fault in such a conclusion of identity as private, but were so thoroughly convinced of their earlier conclusion that all collective understandings of identity were classified "under the head of pathology and illusion" (Burke, *ATH 263*). However, an accurate account of identity holds that identity is not individual, "that a man

'identifies himself' with all sorts of manifestations beyond himself" (Burke, *ATH 263*). Identification, in this manner, is the active and continual formulation of identity.

Burke explains that identity as collective, and not private, is something that cannot be cured, as it is a normal symbolic process for all human beings. A particular identification may be broken from but a set of identifications remains. In fact, "whatever he might *think* he was doing, the psychoanalyst 'cures' his patient of a faulty identification only insofar as he smuggles in *an alternative identification*" (Burke, *ATH* 263-4).[12] When one identification is removed, another takes its place to reinforce the structural layout of identifications that form any identity. In other words, "the so-called 'I' is merely a unique combination of partially conflicting 'corporate we's'" (Burke, *ATH* 264). At times, "these various corporate identities work fairly well together" and "at other times they conflict, with disturbing moral consequences" (Burke, *ATH* 264).

From here, Burke moves into what we might more commonly understand "corporate identities" to be. While Burkes does indicate earlier, with references to the end of Hellenism and the Stoics, that corporate identities can attach to an individual, they are not limited as such. These identifications can also connect to collective bodies, such as businesses, governments, and social corporations. What is so interesting about Burke's understanding of corporate identities here is the shift that takes place in his understanding of identity because of it. In *Permanence & Change*, Burke maintains psychological understanding of identity framed around perspective by incongruity and thought experiments. In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke's expounding upon corporate

[12] Interestingly, Burke makes an additional comment about faulty identifications (which, for Burke, are real and can be seen in the German people's identification with Hitler): "The man who dies in battle, as the result of a faulty identification, is better off than a man who can identify himself with no corporate trend at all" (*ATH* 263).

identities presents a social understanding of identity in which identification with organizations and other individuals is necessary and unavoidable. Such a social understanding of identity undoubtedly becomes important to Burke's later understanding of rhetoric and signifies the other side to his theory of identification: one part social, one part psychological.

Given his shift from psychological to social, Burke necessarily defines identification in *Attitudes Toward History* in terms of sociality: "To sum up: Identification is not in itself abnormal; nor can it be 'scientifically' eradicated. One's participation in a collective, social role cannot be obtained in any other way. In fact, 'identification' is hardly other than a name for the *function of sociality*" (266-7). In other words, identification occurs whenever there are social interactions and/or symbols that mediate between individuals and groups. As the political and economic are additional functions of sociality, they too would include processes of identification and identity formulation.

Following this brief summary of his understanding of identification, Burke introduces examples of identification at work explicitly in vicarious boasting and epic heroism. In terms of corporate identity, an individual may boast about himself through praises of the corporations (which Burke notes as including church, guild, company, lodge, party, team, college, city, nation, etc.) with which he identifies (*ATH* 267). Similarly, the individual may indirectly share in the attainments of corporations or individuals to which he identifies.[13] Here, "the function of 'vicarious boasting' leads into the matter of 'epic heroism'" (Burke, *ATH* 267). Whereas boasting lacks self-humility,

[13] For example, an individual shares in victory when their identified national football team wins the Super Bowl.

identification with heroes actually leads to it. In being recognized as hero, any who identify with said hero possesses his/her characteristics "*only in attenuated form*" (Burke, *ATH* 267). As such, humility is a regular factor as one rarely, if every, surpasses their hero.

Last and most important to this thesis, Burke notes that perspective by incongruity plays an important role in identification. For Burke, all perspectives are perspectives by incongruity because changes in identifications modify identity and thereby create two simultaneous and incongruous perspectives in one body.

> Identity involves "change of identity" insofar as any given structure of society calls forth conflicts among our "corporate we's." From this necessity you get, in art, the various ritualizations of rebirth. Change of identity is a way of "seeing around the corner." For since the twice born begins as one man and becomes another, he is at once a continuum and duality. Such changes of identity occur in everyone. They become acute when a person has been particularly scrupulous in forming himself about one set of coordinates, so scrupulous that the shift to new co-ordinates requires a violent wrenching of his earlier categories.
>
> From this shift of co-ordinates (intense in some, more subtle in others) he derives his "perspective." In a sense, all perspectives are "perspectives by incongruity." For they are obtained by "seeing from two angles at once." (Burke, *ATH* 268-9)

Expanding Burke's above explanation, all new identifications are perspectives by incongruity that have manifest in a social, political, and material human body. This is especially true when we recall *Permanence and Change*'s statement that rebirth and perspective by incongruity are synonymous (Burke 154). As rebirth occurs during

conflicts of identity (for the individual is in the process of *becoming* rather than *being*), perspective by incongruity acts as the very thing that allows us, and at times forces us, to change identifications. Perspective by incongruity, then, allows for new identifications to occur psychologically while new identifications are simultaneously being created socially. Without the possibility of new identifications, persuasion between individuals cannot occur. Perspective by incongruity paired with sociality, then, is a two-sided method that creates and allows for new identifications and thereby multiple modes of persuasion.

To the point of this thesis, if perspective by incongruity is the other side of the disassociation of ideas, then disassociation is also present in identification. Both perspective by incongruity and disassociation can form the psychological side of identification, for the two methods are both sides of the same coin in Burke's terms. As long as they are paired with social factors and influence, disassociation and/or perspective by incongruity can initiate a shift in identity and identification. In this manner, de Gourmont's "The Disassociation of Ideas" grounds how Burke frames identification. Wherever a psychological incongruity, whether based in perspective by incongruity or disassociation, is present, so to is the potential for identification.

The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle

Of course, no examination of identification would be complete without reviewing Burke's most famous application of identification, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle." First presented in the summer of 1939 as a submission to the third American Writer's Congress (George and Selzer 183), "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" breaks down and

critically examines the various identifications and associations Hitler placed throughout his *Mein Kampf*. In critically assessing *Mein Kampf*, Burke sought to provide a strategy for counteracting the various supports and strategies Hitler used in his campaign. As Burke puts it, "[Hitler] was helpful enough to put his cards face up on the table, that we might examine his hands. Let us, then, for God's sake, examine them" (*PLF* 192).

The tracings of "The Disassociation of Ideas" that appear within this text are, as with most texts between *Counter-Statement* and *The Rhetoric of Motives*, subtle and never directly annotated. The influence is there in application only. Burke repeatedly notes and analyzes the various associations that Hitler builds up over the course of *Mein Kampf* and, at times, uses disassociation to critically break down those associations. These sections of chapter three will trace such analyses by Burke, starting with Hitler's assessment of a needed common enemy and ending with Hitler's "factual" difference between the Aryan and Jewish races. By doing so, I hope to show Burke's application of both (dis)association and identification.

Before starting this section, then, it may be useful to provide the primary distinction between the terms "association" and "identification." Though this will be explained more fully in chapter four, association and identification differ based upon their realm of operations. Associations occur strictly at the level of ideas and concepts. Identifications, on the other hand, occur between ideas, thoughts, and peoples. Whenever an idea becomes associated with a human being, whether it is a group or an individual, an identification is being made rather than an association. As the title of de Gourmont's essay states, it is the disassociation of *ideas*, and all (dis)associations stay within this

realm. Identifications deal in aspects of the human and human relations, (dis)associations deal in ideas.

With this distinction made, let us turn to "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle." To begin, Burke notes an old association made into key identification for Hitler. As Hitler would often utilize religious rhetoric in talks about state affairs, Burke looked for associations based upon religious thought. One of the most prominent examples was of the Devil as a common enemy to all.

> An important ingredient of unity in the Middle Ages (an ingredient that long did its unifying work despite the many factors driving towards disunity) was the symbol of a *common enemy*, the Prince of Evil himself. Men who can unite on nothing else can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all. Hitler himself states the case very succinctly. (Burke, *PLF* 193)

Utilizing the symbol of common enemy, Hitler built a racial policy that justified linking this association of the Dark Prince to the Jewish people. For the Germany people and those of Aryan descent, the Jew was a unifying principle because the Jewish people acted as something to scapegoat and rally against. More to the point of this thesis, what Burke is noting is actually a transition from an association to an identification. While the association of Devil-common enemy was a widely accepted idea, Jew-common enemy was new. Jew-common enemy was also more than an association. Jew-common enemy was an identification because it merged the psychological associations of common enemy to the social stigmas regularly faced by the Jewish people. By acknowledging that an association can be identified to a real social group, Burke pushes past de Gourmont's (dis)association and into what we know as identification.

While analyzing Hitler's identification of the Jew as common enemy, Burke also explicitly links identification to rebirth, and thereby to de Gourmont's (dis)association of ideas, when discussing Hitler's spontaneous rise of anti-Semitism (*PLF* 197). Hitler's anti-Semitism occurred during a shift in perspective, during a rebirth in Hitler the man. According to Burke, "[Hitler] talks of this transition as a period of 'double life,' a struggle of 'reason' and 'reality' against his 'heart'" (*PLF* 198). It was a struggle where "reason" won out, and Hitler discovered the "cause" of the misery surrounding him (Burke, *PLF* 198-9). Having located the "cause" in the Jewish people, Hitler could now confront it.

Hitler's rebirth and spontaneous rise of anti-Semitism is an example of perspective by incongruity. As Burke suggests, Hitler develops a new orientation/identity and brings with that identity a new set of identifications, the most dangerous of which being Jew-common enemy. Hitler struggled against his personal perspective, or reason, and his perspective of reality. But rather than "reason" winning out, Hitler actually developed an impious association between his "reason" and his "reality" which created in him a perspective by incongruity. This then signaled a rebirth in identity and a new set of identifications. In this way, Hitler was able to convincingly justify to himself and others how the Jew was not only an enemy but also the root cause of the German people's misery.

With the cause located in the Jewish people, Hitler's orientation and perspective allowed for more associations and from them a network of racial identifications. For example, Burke notes the association Hitler made between the country of Germany and the "dehorned Siegfried" (*PLF* 195). From this association, Hitler constructed an

analogous narrative that furthers identifications of Jew-common enemy. As Burke summarizes:

> Germany in dispersion is the "dehorned Siegfried." The masses are "feminine." As such, they desire to be led by a dominating male. This male, as orator, woos them--and, when he has won them, he commands them. The rival male, the villainous Jew, would on the contrary "seduce" them. If he succeeds, he poisons their blood by intermingling with them. Whereupon, by purely associative connections of ideas, we are moved into attacks upon syphilis, prostitution, incest, and other similar misfortunes. (*PLF* 195)

Burke's above analysis of the rivalry between the dehorned Siegfried and the villainous Jew for the attention of the feminine masses reveals hints of de Gourmont's influence. Most obvious is Burke's choice of words, "by purely associative connections of ideas" (*PLF* 195). Yet, Burke is not solely using de Gourmont's association of ideas, but also his own extension of association. Whereas de Gourmont's method did its work solely in the realm of ideas, here Burke is noting the connection of people to ideas. Connecting poisoned blood to syphilis, prostitution, etc. is an association; Burke, however, extends this method into identification when the association is attached to a group of people. By extension, the Jewish people are identified as the poison that is destroying the German masses. A medicine man,[14] then, is needed to administer the cure.

With the rivalry in place and the protagonist and antagonist labeled, Hitler produced opposing identifications based upon his dialectic tension between the Jewish and Aryan races. Burke notes three of these opposing identifications outright: Aryan-

[14] Of course, the "medicine-man" is the label that Burke grants Hitler and other orators who may be like him (*PLF* 191).

constructive, Jew-destructive; Aryan-heroism, Jewish-cunning; and Aryan-sacrifice, Jew-arrogance. Burke goes on to comment, though sometimes briefly, on each of these identifications.

What Burke, then, is doing in this commentary is not only noting Hitler's identifications between races, but also providing a disassociation of the problematic associations made within those identifications. The first of Aryan-constructive, Jew-destructive is grounded in the same logic that Burke sees pervading Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, that of a noneconomic interpretation of economic ills.

> Invariably, [Hitler] ends his diatribes against contemporary economic ills by a shift into an insistence that we must get to the "true" cause, which is centered in "race." The "Aryan" is "constructive"; the Jew is "destructive"; and the "Aryan," to continue his *construction*, must *destroy* the Jewish *destruction*. The Aryan, as the vessel of *love*, must *hate* the Jewish *hate*. (Burke, *PLF* 204)

That Hitler's identifications not only accept but seemingly justified associations of *destructive construction* and *hateful love* seems troubling for Burke. These concepts fall into separate moral categories but Hitler's fusion of them, for all intents and purposes, allows constant justification for anything done by the Aryan race, especially against the Jewish people.

Overall, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" shows, in application, the extension Burke makes from operating primarily in the realm of ideas with disassociation and perspective by incongruity to the realm of human relations with identification. While associations and rebirth are still a part of the process, the focus on the identifications made between peoples grows ever prominent.

So, when we trace the theoretical influences of "The Disassociation of Ideas" between *Counter-Statement* and *The Rhetoric of Motives*, we find that *Permanence and Change* provides a strong connection to de Gourmont's work through perspective by incongruity. *Attitudes Toward History* then provides the theoretical connective from perspective by incongruity to identification. Lastly, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" provides us with an example of how Burke applied both methods of identification and (dis)association. So while the presence of de Gourmont is never really explicit between *Counter-Statement* and *The Rhetoric of Motives*, I hope to have shown how his theoretical influence through disassociation lingers. Thankfully, chapter four will present us with an explicit reference to "The Disassociation of Ideas" once again and thus help to solidify the influence of disassociation on identification.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Rhetoric of Motives, Identification, and "The Disassociation of Ideas"

Having explored Burke's earlier workings in identification as well as their relationship to de Gourmont, we now turn to the ultimate synthesis of Burke's work in identification, *A Rhetoric of Motives*. The second book of what was to be Burke's incomplete *Motivorum*, *A Rhetoric of Motives* deals explicitly with the theory of identification and rhetoric as well as its application by, among others, Aristotle, Marx, Bentham, Machiavelli, and even de Gourmont. This chapter will offer an analysis of identification with particular attention paid to the relationship of Burke's developed view on the topic to de Gourmont's own disassociation of ideas.

Consubstantiality & Division

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke proposes a definition of identification as a sharing of substance that creates a parallel process of division (22). "Identification and 'Consubstantiality'" becomes the key section in *Rhetoric of Motives* as it attaches discussions of shared and divided substance to identification. What Burke means by "substance," and "consubstantiality" therein, remains cloudy, however. Of the better explanations given, Burke gives a description of substance based on old philosophies: "for substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting-together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*" (*RM* 21). In other words, shared substance arises from common concepts and ideas reached through collective acts with other bodies.

Still, substance cannot be shared evenly. In giving to one, another is deprived. Similarly, in any process of identification, someone is necessarily divided from some other. "Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division" (Burke, *RM* 22). Humans share substance with some and thereby necessarily deprive others of the same substance; human interactions encourage unity as well as separation. As such, absolute unity and absolute separation can never be reached (Burke, *RM* 22). Processes of identification & division are reciprocal and can never be mutually exclusive. This reciprocity is what calls forth the need for rhetoric. "Put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric. Here is a major reason why rhetoric, according to Aristotle, 'proves opposites'" (Burke, *RM* 25). Identification leads to division; division leads to identification. Each process produces the other, and rhetoric becomes the means to navigate the two.

Ultimately, the scholarly acknowledgment and rhetorical study of identification become important for Burke because they further analysis of social strife and war since, as Burke notes, "in the end, men are brought to that most tragically ironic of all divisions, or conflicts, wherein millions of cooperative acts go into the preparation for one single destructive act. We refer to the ultimate *disease* of cooperation: *war*" (*RM* 22). For Burke, understanding the rhetorical process of identification can bring an understanding of war and similar forms of conflict. As Burke states himself, his "*Rhetoric* deals with the possibilities of classification in its *partisan* aspects; it considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at

odds with one another" (*RM* 22). Put succinctly, then, *Rhetoric of Motives* and its focus on identification advances Burke's project of *ad bellum purificandum* introduced in *Grammar of Motives*. Understood as such, the key concept in *Rhetoric of Motives* is that of "identification;" yet, the key term in *Rhetoric of Motives* is none other than "war."

De Gourmont on "Dissociation"

Having spent some time briefly reviewing Burke's conception of identification in *Rhetoric of Motives* as well as acknowledging his larger project toward purifying war, we can return to the primary focus of this thesis, the role of de Gourmont's "Disassociation of Ideas" upon identification. And, in the second major division of his *Rhetoric*, named "Traditional Principles of Rhetoric," Burke explicitly recalls de Gourmont and his work in a section titled "De Gourmont on 'Dissociation.'" Expectedly, Burke here reviews and emphasizes de Gourmont's own process of division, a.k.a. disassociation, and how it functions within the schema of identification/division.

Calling it "perhaps the most picturesquely radical approach to the subject of identification and division," "The Disassociation of Ideas" is for Burke a great stressor of division[15] (*RM* 149-50). Yet, even with its stress on division, Burke does tie de Gourmont's method of disassociation to identification.

> You can accept old associations, he says, form new ones--or, if you are rare and expert in the kind of intellectuality he advocates, you can make "original dissociations" (or disassociations). But looking more closely at his essay, we see

[15] Burke suggests that this emphasis on division most likely sprung from de Gourmont's belief that disassociation was "the distinctive mark of [de Gourmont's] favorite virtue, intelligence" (*RM* 150).

> that its great emphasis upon *division* really serves to sharpen our understanding of *identification*. *Indeed, if we were allowed but one text to illustrate how identification operates in language, we would select this essay*, which is almost sadistically concerned with the breaking of identifications (*RM* 150; emphasis added).

In this often-overlooked passage, Burke overtly states the significance that "The Disassociation of Ideas" holds in his mind when concerning processes of identification. "Disassociation" is a cornerstone from which to build methodologies of identification and division in language. Remembering that a cornerstone is not an entire structure, Burke reminds the reader "we need not accept [de Gourmont's] doctrine as wholly stated in his essay" (*RM* 153). Instead, "Disassociation of Ideas" should be utilized as starting method and built upon in ways similar to what Burke suggested in *Counter-Statement* and featured in *Permanence and Change* and *A Rhetoric of Motives*.

After emphasizing the significance of "Disassociation of Ideas," Burke goes on to recount de Gourmont's explanation of "truths" and "commonplaces" within the essay. Burke then extends this explanation by adding exposition of his own.

> In the course of his essay, [de Gourmont] proceeds to "liberate" various commonplaces that men have lived by. That is, he methodically questions the assumption that the conditions in which an abstract ideal is materialized are inherently identified with that abstract ideal. Thus, purely as a specialist in the analysis of ideas, he perfects the critique of idealism. In effect, he discovers that the pattern of the god incarnate lurks in every single commonplace, which links

> some particular image, or set of worldly conditions, with some abstract principle or idea. (Burke, *RM* 151)

In other words, within any given commonplace lies a potential perspective that can lead and dictate systems of thought and practice. Having the potential to become something similar to Richard Weaver's god-term,[16] commonplaces could organize entire systems of thinking and practice around a single concept.[17] De Gourmont's disassociation can "liberate" these commonplaces by breaking them down into their smaller, conceptual parts. This method was so good that Burke even believes de Gourmont critiques his own belief of idealism. And though in some ways this inadvertent self-critique may be the case, the critique of idealism to which Burke refers actually helps us understand the primary difference between de Gourmont's disassociation and Burke's identification: disassociation is epistemological; identification is ontological.

Two Distinctions between Disassociation and Identification

The first and most obvious distinction between disassociation and identification is the goal of each concept. As the terms suggest disassociation seeks to divide, and identification seeks to unite. As de Gourmont begins his essay "The Disassociation of Ideas," there are only two ways of thinking, through either association or disassociation (3). De Gourmont, as was stated in chapter two of this thesis, prefers disassociation as a critical method. Burke prefers association, a point which he makes clear when he calls perspective by incongruity a form of fusion (*P&C liv*). That we know Burke's major

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[16] A term that Burke chooses to invoke only a few lines after the above quote.
[17] Burke suggests "freedom" as one such example (*RM* 151).

contribution to rhetorical studies as identification instead of division only further proves this point.

The second and less obvious distinction between identification and disassociation lies not in the focus, but in the realm of operation. Identification works ontologically and disassociation works epistemologically. Stated differently, identification deals with states of being in various peoples and persons, while disassociation deals with knowledge formation.

Little needs to be said on the matter of identification as most scholars would agree that Burke's focus was on peoples and persons. That Burke wanted to look at the motives of peoples and persons to the point that he titled his incomplete trilogy the *Motivorum* only furthers this idea. That his most prominent application of identification, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," demonstrates how Burke sought to locate the motivations and identifications in one man, Hitler, and how those identifications were then applied to two "races" of people, Aryan and Jewish, is impossible to dispute. Furthermore, Burke's work in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" helps demonstrates how identification is an ontological process. Burke describes how Hitler identifies those of Aryan "blood" as heroic and humble and those of Jewish blood as cunning and arrogant (*PLF* 208). Heroism, humility, cunning, and arrogance are all states of being which motivate each particular "race." As such, particular states of being are identified with particular peoples. These identifications then reflect the presumed motives of those peoples.

Showing that de Gourmont's disassociation is limited to knowledge formation becomes the real proving point for our distinction. As Richard Aldington describes it the

"dissociation of ideas is a purely logical process" (14), and according to Glenn Burne, "Gourmont was obviously not concerned with pragmatic applications" because "the 'cult of pure ideas' has responsibilities only to the perfection of its craft, and the fact that the world of practical life could not abide by the rules of such a craft need not concern the specialist in free inquiry" (62). Burke too makes a similar statement about de Gourmont and disassociation in *Rhetoric*'s "De Gourmont on 'Dissociation.'" As Burke puts it, "the pure cult of ideas is not concerned with pragmatic necessities. It has responsibilities only to the perfection of its craft. Though the world of practical life could not abide by its rules, this problem need not concern the specialist in free inquiry" (*RM* 150). De Gourmont was not interested in practical interactions between people; rather, de Gourmont was concerned only with maximizing the liberties of the individual and, to do so, would only require greater allowances in freedom of thought. Disassociation, as de Gourmont conceived it, centered in thought, not practical interactions or particular identities. De Gourmont was an Idealist-Symbolist concerned with perfecting his craft in the "cult of pure ideas." Practical life and interactions with others did not factor in for him. This especially makes sense given the lifestyle de Gourmont would take on after the start of his "facial drama."

Even if we do not take the word of the previous three authors on the limitation of de Gourmont and disassociation to the realm of ideas, we can see it in de Gourmont's own application of disassociation. The title of the essay immediately gives away de Gourmont's realm of operation, for it is called "The Disassociation of *Ideas*." Furthermore, de Gourmont disassociates concepts like pleasure-generation and justice-equilibrium. The closest de Gourmont even comes to dealing with human agents through

disassociation is in soldier-honor and Byzantium-decadence. Except these too both operate merely as concepts; soldier-honor is one term, one association for de Gourmont, as is Byzantium-decadence. De Gourmont is not concerned about the soldier or his identity, and he is not concerned with the Byzantine Empire, which is in itself merely an abstraction. De Gourmont is concerned the problematic conceptual and terministic association made between the two ideas. Disassociation deals in ideas, not human agents.

Understood as such, we can conceive of Burke's identification as not just the other side to, but also a significant extension of, de Gourmont's disassociation. Burke, whether knowingly or not, extended beyond de Gourmont's realm of operation from just ideas to human agents, motivations, and actions when he introduced identification. Perhaps this extension was the indirect result of Burke's time teaching at the University of Chicago, with its strong commitment to pragmatism, or Burke's readings of John Dewey and William James (George and Selzer 183-189). At this time, however, this is merely speculation. The thing to grasp is that there are important differences between Burke's identification and de Gourmont's disassociation. Important differences indicate that Burke took his own advice in *Counter-Statement* and further developed the criticism and methodology de Gourmont had developed in disassociation (*CS* 24).

Two More Indicators

Given these differences between identification and disassociation, one wonders how it was that Burke came to utilize de Gourmont even as much as he did. Certainly Burke's method of identification might have been arrived at without relying on de Gourmont's work. And, while this might be true, two indicators suggest that Burke's

investments into de Gourmount were brought about from his circle of friends and his interest in motives.

The first indicator actually lies in Burke's dedication to W. C. Blum at the beginning of *A Rhetoric of Motives*. As Ross Wolin notes, W. C. Blum was a pseudonym for Sibley Watson, who was both co-owner of *The Dial* as well as Burke's friend and mentor (17). The significance of this dedication, then, is not only to who the dedication is addressed, but also what the dedication signifies. According to Wolin, "Burke even suggested that Watson provided him with the concept of 'identification'" (17). Burke's own dedication to Watson in *A Rhetoric of Motives* bolsters this suggestion, for *A Rhetoric of Motives* was Burke's flagship publication on identification. In all likelihood, Watson's influence on identification occurred during the course of Burke's tenure at the *Dial* and may have even resulted from feedback on Burke's submission, "Approaches to Remy de Gourmont." While this suggestion may seem a little unlikely at first, we need to recall that Watson was "a student of the Symbolist poets" (Selzer 116). Since de Gourmont would have been included in such a grouping, we can have little doubt that Watson would have read de Gourmont and discussed his works with Burke. If this is the case and Watson did help develop the concept of identification for Burke, it is entirely conceivable that it was from discussion of de Gourmont's works, in particular disassociation. Unfortunately, the question of Watson's influence has not been answered and perhaps can never be answered.

The second, and stronger, indicator was left by Burke in a letter to William Carlos Williams. Writing on Februrary 14, 1947, Burke is discussing with Williams the start to

his "academic" methods and defending why he places such focus on "clusters" or "key terms" (East 123-4). Burke says:

> My notion is that, if life is worth living, it is worth being meditated upon. That is, it is worth having "key terms" for all the important motives in it (such as love, poetry, property, dreams, war,[18] work and its problems, etc.) It is worth our asking ourselves how all these things are or should be related to one another. And since such a line-up must be done by words, for both appreciative and admonitory purposes we should want to know how the nature of the words themselves may both favorably and unfavorably affect the line-up. (East 125, emphasis in the original)

And what of the starting point for Burke's interest in such academic endeavors? "De Gourmont's essay on 'The Dissociation of Ideas,' which I had read many years before, was probably the start, so far as critical method is concerned" (East 124). Burke, in other words, identifies de Gourmont as the start to his critical thinking on "key terms" and motives. For Burke, ideas like love and war form the key terms of our motivation, and these ideas in turn are created through (dis)association. Yet these key terms and the motivations they are intertwined with can be influenced by words from another. New connections between ideas can be created and, as Burke later realized, have real influence over another human being and his/her motives. Burke's noting Hitler identifying the Jews with the Devil through a mimicking of religious discourse is evidence enough of Burke's realization. Yet, this realization could not have occurred where it not for the seed planted in de Gourmont's "The Disassociation of Ideas."

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[18] This will be the self-proclaimed focus of Burke's *Rhetoric* when it is released three years later.

Let us now close with a few comments about the overall import of this thesis. As it was posited in chapter one, this thesis attempts to show that Remy de Gourmont's "La Dissociation des Idées" grounds the series of Kenneth Burke's thought which would produce Burke's identification: that identification was cultivated though disassociation. To support this claim, I have presented two forms of evidence throughout these thesis chapters. The first type were theoretical tracings of de Gourmont's influence in Burke's writings. Taking Burke's words as a starting point and showing how theory-based tracings of "Disassociation of Ideas" appear in *Permanence and Change*, *Attitudes Toward History*, and *Philosophy of Literary Form*, I have shown how perspective by incongruity, the other side of de Gourmont's disassociation of ideas, was the conceptual piece which allowed for Burke's transition into identification, which itself seems an extension of some of de Gourmont's own methodology onto human agents.

Accompanying these theoretical tracings was the second type of evidence, Burke's own words, which highlighted the significance of de Gourmont's "Disassociation of Ideas." Found in various texts, "Approaches," "*Counter-Statement*," "*Permanence and Change*," and "*A Rhetoric of Motives*," as well as letters to William Carlos Williams and Malcolm Cowley, Burke's comments on de Gourmont and disassociation provide breadcrumbs which suggest disassociation as the real starting point for Burke's writings in identification. While there still may be room for doubt with the evidence presented, I believe that at the very least any reader of Burke would gain from a reading of "The Disassociation of Ideas." It seems the most likely text to be a starting point for Burke's work in identification, and Burke himself seems to hold the work in high enough esteem to return to and cite it even after many others had forgotten it.

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